

ARKANSAS' FALLEN

Our great state of Arkansas has already sent thousands of our own men and women from the National Guard, Reserves and active duty forces to serve in this conflict. I am extremely proud of their contribution. Sadly, some of these heroes have sacrificed their lives in the service of their country; not just for the sake of their own children, but for all of our children. Their loss is a tragic and sobering reminder of the terrible human sacrifice that war brings.

Those serving in Iraq today and those who have given the last full measure of devotion, are not only military men and women, but are also doctors, lawyers, police officers and firemen. They are teachers, factory workers, business owners and elected officials. Most importantly, they are husbands and wives; mothers and fathers. In short, they are the leaders of their respective communities. The loss of these courageous souls will not only be felt on the battlefield, but also by their families, friends and communities left behind who will miss their love and leadership.

Our patience and our will have been tested, and will continue to be tested in the months ahead. Through it all, we must find strength in our unity and solace in our efforts to honor the commitment of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. Our nation and our state will long remember the impact these brave men and women have had in the defense of our freedom. Through their loss and in our pain, we gain a better appreciation of the many blessings we share as Americans.

Arkansas' fallen left their homes as family members, co-workers and friends. They return as heroes. They and their families will be in my thoughts and prayers and I am honored and humbled to pay tribute to their sacrifice. Although they may no longer be with us, their spirit and their legacy live on in the examples they set and the many lives they touched.

Casualties of Operation Enduring Freedom & Operation Iraqi Freedom

Box, Jr., Hesley
Cason, Ahmed A. "Mel"
Felder, Arthur "Bo"
Jones, Gussie M.
Kordsmeier, Patrick W.
Marcum, Van Ryan
Melton, Kenneth A.
Mooney, Adam
Moss, Keelan L.
Parker, Tommy L.
Smith, Brandon Clinton

Brandon, Stacey C.
Cheatham, Jonathan
Johnson, Jr., Michael Van
Kimbrough, Paul W.
Labadie, William
McGaugh, Dustin K.
Miranda, Troy "Leon"
Morehead, Kevin
Orton, Billy Joe
Peters, Dustin

Box, Jr., Hesley

Age: 24
Hometown: Chidester
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Arkansas Army National Guard - Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry
Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team
Where: Killed by a car bomb in Baghdad, Iraq, on May 6th, 2004

Sgt. Hesley "Tank" Box Jr., of Chidester, was a 1998 graduate of Camden Fairview High School. He was as an active member of the community, a member of the Roadside Church of God in Ozan and involved with the New Sanctuary Christian Center in Chidester.

In the words of his sister-in-law, Sherry Johnson, "Hesley was a good person, period. He was always giving of his time, always honest with you, always willing to help you out, always willing to go the extra mile to help somebody out."

The relationships Sgt. Box built with his colleagues was a testament to the kind of person he was. With his two young sons back in Arkansas, he became a father figure for younger members of his unit once they were deployed. At just 24, he was a relatively seasoned veteran, having served in the National Guard since 1997 through two previous deployments in Bosnia and Saudi Arabia. In March, he left for Iraq with his comrades in the 39th Infantry Brigade.

My condolences and prayers go out to Sgt. Box's wife, Alexia; his two sons Zacheas and TaDarius; his parents, Hesley, Sr. and Barbie Box; and his brother, Tarcus Kyron Box.

Brandon, Stacey C.

Age: 35
Hometown: Hazen
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Arkansas Army National Guard - 39th Support Battalion, 39th Brigade Combat
Team, 1st Cavalry Division
Cause: Killed in a mortar attack in Taji, Iraq, on April 24, 2004

Sgt. Stacey Brandon, of Hazen, was a 1987 graduate of Kingsland High School. As a corrections officer, he went on to work at the state Department of Correction in Pine Bluff and later with the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Forrest City.

In the words of his colleague, Lt. Colonel Don Brooks, "Stacey was one of those guys that five minutes after you met him you felt like you'd known him forever, and you knew you had a friend for life."

Sgt. Brandon joined the Arkansas National Guard in 1990. In May of 2001, he was transferred to Headquarters Company, 39th Support Battalion, before he went on active duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom in October.

My thoughts and prayers are with Sgt. Brandon's wife, April; his year-old daughter

Brianna; his four-year old son Johnathan; his parents George and Mary Ann; and all of those who knew and loved him.

Cason, Ahmed A. "Mel"

Age: 24
Hometown: McGehee
Rank: Specialist
United States Army - 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division
Cause: Killed by an attack of rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire in Baghdad, Iraq, on April 4, 2004

Spc. Ahmed "Mel" Cason was born in Ft. Hood, Texas, but spent much of his early childhood in McGehee. As the proud son of two parents who served in the Army, Spc. Cason followed in their footsteps by enlisting in 2000. As a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, he was deployed to Baghdad in March of 2001.

Upon his return from the war, Spc. Cason often spoke of reuniting with his family and hopefully attending a junior college where he could play football and eventually follow a career in athletics.

We all share in the sentiments of Spc. Cason's uncle, Wendell Hunt, who said "We are very proud of Ahmed and his service. He strongly believed in keeping America safe for his children and for all of us."

Our condolences and prayers go out to Spc. Cason's wife, Allison; his three-year old daughter Akilaah; his ten-month old son Gabriel; his brothers Bobby and Cedric; and his sisters Jamila and Danitra Hunt.

Cheatham, Jonathan

Age: 19
Hometown: Camden
Rank: Private 1st Class
United States Army Reserve - 489th Engineer Battalion
Cause: Killed by a rocket-propelled grenade attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on July 26, 2003

Throughout his childhood and into high school, Pvc. John Marshall Cheatham had a love of sports, particularly soccer, and enjoyed playing trumpet in the school marching band. As a teenager, he was forced to take on the unexpected responsibilities as the paternal head of his household when his father was killed in an accident in 2000. Pvc. Cheatham helped comfort his family in their time of mourning and became a fatherly figure for his sister. "He cared for his sister deeply, always taking care of her," said his mother, Dr. Barbara Porchia. These added obligations, she said, prompted her son to join the Army Reserves.

Pvc. Cheatham's love of animals led him to enroll in college with an interest in veterinarian medicine and computers. He had completed just two weeks of classes before he was activated by the military.

My deepest condolences and prayers go out to his family and loved ones.

Felder, Arthur "Bo"

Age: 36
Hometown: Lewisville
Rank: Captain
Arkansas Army National Guard - 39th Support Battalion, 39th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division
Cause: Killed in a mortar attack in Taji, Iraq, on April 24, 2004

Cpt. Arthur "Bo" Felder spent much of his life giving back to the community. Remembered by his friends and neighbors as a person of faith and prayer, he is also remembered through his involvement and positive impact on the youth of Arkansas. Cpt. Felder found pleasure in his service as a youth minister and also worked at Step One Alternative school in Little Rock, a school for troubled youth.

"We've had some hard kids to get to, troubled kids from one extreme to the other," said Rev. Eric Alexander, pastor of St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church in North Little Rock. "He would just walk up and put an arm around them, and before you'd know it, they were best friends with 'Mr. Bo,' and whatever he said, they would do."

Cpt. Felder also spent nearly two decades serving his nation in the Army and National Guard. During that time, he was deployed in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Honduras.

My condolences and prayers go out to Cpt. Felder's ex-wife, Brenda; his daughter Amari; his son Jaelun; his mother, Dr. Cheryl Stuart; his brothers Robert Stuart and Littrelle Felder; and his two sisters Gwendolyn Gingery and Kelana Greer.

Johnson, Jr., Michael Van

Age: 25
Hometown: Little Rock
Rank: Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class
Naval Medical Center San Diego - 3rd Marine Division Detachment
Cause: Killed in action in Iraq on March 25, 2003

Navy Medic Michael Van "Doc" Johnson, Jr. was born and raised in Little Rock and graduated from Parkview High School. He would later attend the University of Central Arkansas, where he would earn his degree.

In the words of his sister, Janisa Hooks, "He was just a big kid. He liked to draw and he loved basketball, a real people's person."

In March of 2003, he became the first serviceman from Arkansas killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Navy reports that he was killed by Iraqi forces while tending to an injured Marine.

In the words of his family, he is their hero and they are proud of the sacrifice he made. "He did it for us, so we can walk around the United States and be free," said Hooks. "He made peace with God and himself before he went over."

Shortly before his death, his mother received a letter from him. "Mom," he wrote, "I love you, and don't be afraid if I don't return, realize I'm in heaven with God."

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Cherice; his mother, Jana Norfleet; and all those who knew and loved him.

Jones, Gussie M.

Age: 41
Hometown: Forrest City
Rank: Captain, Medical Surgical Nurse
United States Army - 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade - 31st Combat Support Hospital
Cause: Died of a non-combat-related medical condition in Baghdad, Iraq, on March 7, 2004

Cpt. Gussie M. Jones was born in Forrest City and spent much of her youth in Palestine, Arkansas. Along with her seven siblings, she was forced to become self-reliant from an early age due to the untimely death of her parents. As an honor roll student, she became the first in her family to go to college. Cpt. Jones attended Arkansas Central University where she earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1986. She would go on to earn a degree in nursing, her second bachelor's degree, from Syracuse University in 1988. That same year, she was selected to attend the Army Enlisted Commissioning Program and began her career as a registered nurse and a commissioned officer in September of 1998.

Cpt. Jones served at the Beaumont Army Medical Center's intensive care unit and she volunteered to serve as a medical surgical nurse in Baghdad. Cpt. Jones left from Biggs Army Airfield on January 7 and passed away in November of heart failure in the Baghdad hospital where she served.

"She was a very dedicated person and was always smiling," said co-worker and friend, Cpt. Susan Gilbert. "If anyone asked her to do something, she would do it. And she was very kind and gentle and patient with the patients."

My thoughts and prayers go out to her family and loved ones.

Kimbrough, Paul W.

Age: 44
Hometown: Little Rock
Rank: Lieutenant Colonel
United States Army Reserve - 416th Engineering Command, Team 28
Cause: Died of cardiac arrest in Incirlik, Turkey, on October 3, 2003

Lt. Colonel Paul Kimbrough was a graduate of the University of Central Arkansas and University of Arkansas School of Law. He served as a staff member for Congressman Ray Thornton, then moved to the Transportation Department and later the department's inspector general's office, where he was working when he was deployed.

In the words of Thornton, "Paul had a sense of duty to his fellow man and his country. He was filled with love for his country, for his family, and for his friends."

Just prior to departure, Lt. Colonel Kimbrough was engaged to Yvette Rodriguez of

Washington, D.C., with plans to marry upon his return.

Along with his Army Reserve Unit, Lt. Colonel Kimbrough was working to build shelters and improve conditions at the Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. On October 3, he was evacuated by plane to Turkey after complaining of chest pains but went into cardiac arrest while in flight and later passed away.

When addressing the parents of Lt. Colonel Kimbrough, college friend Jerry Malone spoke of his friend, "Mr. and Mrs. Kimbrough, I can't tell you what you did for this world by bringing us Paul Kimbrough. I won't weep for him. I'm going to weep for myself and all the people he left behind."

My deepest condolences and prayers go out to his family and loved ones.

Kordsmeier, Patrick W.

Age: 49

Hometown: North Little Rock

Rank: Chief Warrant Officer

Arkansas Army National Guard - 39th Support Battalion, 39th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division

Cause: Killed in a mortar attack in Taji, Iraq, on April 24, 2004

Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Kordsmeier attended Little Rock Catholic High School before he enlisted in the army at age 17. He would faithfully serve for 30 years, becoming eligible for retirement before the war in Iraq. Instead of retiring, he requested an extension so he might further serve his country.

He was killed in a mortar attack on April 24 as he rushed to the aid of a fellow soldier who was wounded in the attack. It was a selfless act that personified the courage of this Arkansas hero.

In the words of those who knew him best, "He was a dedicated soldier, loving father, devoted husband, supportive brother, and trusted friend. He was a true American hero."

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Linda; his daughter, Jennifer Kordsmeier-Legate; and his two sons, Jason and David.

Labadie, William

Age: 45

Hometown: Bauxite

Rank: Sergeant 1st Class

Arkansas Army National Guard - Troop E, 151st Cavalry Squadron, 39th Infantry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division

Cause: Killed in an insurgent attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on April 7, 2004

Sgt. William "Wild Bill" Labadie joined the Marine Corps after high school and served for eight years before returning home and becoming a member of the Arkansas National Guard. Sgt. Labadie was known as a soldier's soldier who took his responsibilities seriously and was excited by the opportunity to use his training in the service of his country.

After having been in Iraq for less than a month and in a combat zone for less than 24 hours, he was fatally wounded when his camp came under a mortar and small arms attack.

Sgt. Labadie's mother, Cheryl, was quoted as saying that "[t]his honestly was his goal in life. He knew that this was his last shot at 45 years old. He told his commanding officer: 'Give me a shot.'"

My deepest condolences and prayers go out to his wife, Sunnie; his son, Bryan; and his parents, Cheryl and Carl Winters of Bauxite.

Marcum, Van Ryan

Age: 21

Hometown: Prescott

Rank: Private

United States Army - 1st Battallion, 19th Infantry, Infantry Training Brigade

Cause: Killed in a training accident at Fort Benning, GA, on June 19, 2004

Described by those who knew him best, Pvt. Van Ryan Marcum was an affable and generous young man who had always been active in his church. A 2001 graduate of Prescott High School, his former youth minister said that he always reached out to younger kids and wanted to be a youth leader when he moved back from Florida last winter.

Pvc. Marcum had a love for the military and was committed to becoming an Army Ranger. Tragically, he was killed halfway through his 14-week basic infantry training when he touched a charged metal structure on a training range at Fort Benning, Ga. A statement from his unit said, "He was a very good soldier. He was doing well with his training and he was well-liked. He was on his way to becoming an Army Ranger."

My thoughts and prayers are with his parents, Gary and Beverly; his grandmother, Adelle Campbell; and to all those who knew and loved him.

McGaugh, Dustin K.

Age: 20

Hometown: Springdale

Rank: Specialist

United States Army - Headquarters Battery - 17th Field Artillery Brigade

Cause: Killed by friendly fire in Balad, Iraq, on September 30, 2003

Spc. Dustin K. McGaugh grew up in Springdale, and although he was born 30 minutes before his twin sister, Windy, she often called him "my kid brother." "I wanted to do everything I could to take care of him," she said at his memorial service.

Spc. McGaugh graduated from high school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 2001. Shortly after, he enlisted in the Army and was based at Fort Sill, Okla.

His family said he loved children. "When he got to Iraq, one captain was telling us that you were trained not to get out of your vehicle," said his father, James McGaugh. "He said he looked over and Dustin was out giving candy to a bunch of kids."

My deepest condolences and prayers go out to his family and friends.

Melton, Kenneth A.

Age: 30
Hometown: Batesville
Rank: Specialist
Arkansas Army National Guard - Company B, 3rd Battalion, 153rd Infantry
Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team
Cause: Killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad, Iraq, on April 25, 2004

Spc. Kenneth Melton, a graduate of Thayer High School, was described as someone with a penchant for practical jokes who was always there for others and would give you the shirt off his back if you needed it.

Spc. Melton had been in Iraq for almost a month when he was killed while traveling as part of a protection team with battalion leaders in Baghdad.

His daughters wrote to the men in the 39th Infantry as often as they could and the fellow soldiers from Bravo Company were especially affected by his death as he had known and worked with many of them for years. It was reported that upon the announcement of Spc. Melton's death, his fellow Guardsmen were more concerned with comforting his wife and children than of the dangers of their mission.

The Rev. Bob Dustman described Spc. Melton as someone with a testimony of faith. "He was not ashamed of that. He practiced living his Christian Faith."

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Carol; his two daughters, Theresa and Marie; and to all those who knew and loved him.

Miranda, Troy "Leon"

Age: 44
Hometown: Little Rock
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Arkansas Army National Guard - C Company, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry
Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team,
Cause: Killed in a grenade attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on May 20, 2004

Sgt. Troy "Leon" Miranda graduated from Wickes High School and went on to study business at Henderson State University. For the past ten years, he worked with the Arkansas State Police in the criminal investigation division's office of investigative support.

Sgt. Miranda joined the Army National Guard in 1984 and was assigned to the Guard's counter drug program. He was deployed last October due in large part to his specialized training. He would serve as commander of his unit, specializing in combat warfare, germ warfare, and chemical warfare.

Sgt. Miranda's sister-in-law said of him, "He was the bravest person I knew." His brother, Phillip, also stationed with the 39th in Iraq, accompanied his body back home to Arkansas.

My deepest condolences and prayers go out to Sgt. Miranda's parents, Carlos and Bobby,

to his family, and to his loved ones.

Mooney, Adam

Age: 28
Hometown: Cambridge, MD
Rank: 1st Lieutenant
3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 10th Mountain Division
Cause: Killed in a helicopter crash in Mosul, Iraq, on January 25, 2004

1st Lt. Adam Mooney was described by a family friend as someone who took life seriously. "He was a good boy and he grew up to be a good man."

He loved to fish and play soccer and enlisted in the military in 1996 as an aviator. On October 26, he was deployed to the Middle East but was killed three months later when his helicopter went down in the Tigris River during a search for missing soldiers on a capsized watercraft.

More than a tenth of his hometown's population, 1,200 people, attended his funeral in Cambridge, Maryland. In Conway, where his wife resides, flags were lowered and yellow ribbons were tied. It was a true testament of the impact Lt. Mooney had on those who knew him.

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Katie; his eight-year old daughter, Sydney; and all those who knew and loved him.

Morehead, Kevin

Age: 33
Hometown: Little Rock
Rank: Master Sergeant
United States Army - 5th Special Forces Group
Cause: Killed in a firefight in Ar Ramadi, Iraq on September 12, 2003

Master Sgt. Kevin N. Morehead, an avid hunter and fisherman who loved his aunt's pumpkin pie, was a 1987 graduate of Little Rock Central High School. He joined the army after a brief time at the University of Arkansas and originally trained as a combat medic. He joined the elite Special Forces in 1994.

Sgt. Morehead was a Green Beret stationed at Fort Campbell, Tennessee, and his 14 years of service included a bronze and silver star. He served with valor in Afghanistan, often calling in airstrikes on Taliban positions. Several times his actions saved the lives of hundreds of his men and that is why this Arkansas hero is featured in the Robin Moore book *The Hunt for bin Laden*.

In the words of Sgt. Morehead's father after his memorial service, "Today is not about me, my wife, his wife. It's an opportunity the state doesn't get very often, to honor a hero."

William Winchell, the department adjutant for the American Legion in Arkansas, found solace in the legacy of Sgt. Morehead, "We know that he did not die in vain. Hopefully, by his actions the world will be a better place for all mankind."

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Theresa; his stepdaughters, Kristen Inman and Kaylyn Council; his sister, Kristen Wright; his grandmother, Zelda Guthrie; and his parents,

James and Jeanette.

Moss, Keelan L.

Age: 23
Hometown: Little Rock
Rank: Sergeant
United States Army - Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Artillery Regiment, 212th Field Air Brigade
Where: Killed in a helicopter crash near Fallujah, Iraq, on November 2nd, 2003

Sgt. Keelan L. Moss was remembered by friends and family as a devoted husband and loving father. He was born in Little Rock, raised in Houston, and entered the service soon after he graduated from high school as an honor student. He was stationed at Fort Sill in Oklahoma at the time of his deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. Moss was deployed in April and was heading home for an early Thanksgiving with his family. Tragically, he was killed with 15 of his colleagues when their transport helicopter was shot down in route to Baghdad International Airport. He is now buried at the Arkansas State Veteran's Cemetery in Little Rock.

In the words of his mother, Velma Deawayne, "I am very, very proud of my son. He will always be my baby, and I couldn't have asked for a better son. I take comfort in knowing he is in heaven with our heavenly father."

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Jennifer; his son, Keelan Daniel; his wife's children, Marjani and Dakari; his mother; and to all of those who knew and loved him.

Orton, Billy Joe

Age: 41
Hometown: Humnoke
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Arkansas Army National Guard - 39th Support Battalion, 39th Brigade Combat Team, Cavalry Division
Cause: Killed in a mortar attack in Taji, Iraq, on April 24, 2004

Staff Sgt. Billy Joe Orton's life revolved around his family and his love for the military. Throughout his youth, he dreamed of being in the Army and years later, would be called a "true soldier" by those who fought beside him. He enlisted in the Army in 1981 and would see deployments in Alaska, Panama, Egypt, and Iraq.

Sgt. Orton's widow, Margarita, was presented with the Bronze Star and Purple Heart at his memorial service. His children, who were also in attendance, were comforted and encouraged by the words of Pastor Tommy Walls of the Macedonia Baptist Church in Humnoke, who reminded them to "stand tall, stand proud," because their father was a hero.

My deepest condolences and prayers go out to his wife, Margarita; his three children; and

to all of those who knew and loved him.

Parker, Jr., Tommy L. "T.J."

Age: 21
Hometown: Cleburne
Rank: Corporal
United States Marines - 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division,
1st Marine Expeditionary Force
Cause: Killed by hostile fire in Ramadi, Iraq, on June 21, 2004

Cpl. Tommy L. Parker, Jr. was born in Stuttgart and graduated from Triple "S" Christian School in Rose Bud. His friends and family remember him as a deeply religious man who was devoted to his family and his country. He was so eager to enlist in the Marines that he needed a waiver signed by his parents because he was only 17. Upon graduation, he married his high school sweetheart and shortly thereafter was assigned to Camp Pendleton in California.

Cpl. Parker would serve with a sniper platoon which seemed a natural fit for a young man with a love of hunting who had accompanied his father on deer and rabbit hunting trips since he was three. His service in the Marine Corps took him to Japan and Indonesia before being deployed to Iraq in February.

Upon his death, a makeshift memorial was created outside the Cleburne County Courthouse. At his memorial service, mourners filled the First United Methodist Church of Heber Springs beyond capacity before his burial with full military honors at the Cleburne County Memorial Gardens.

"Out of all the wonderful virtues he portrayed, the greatest of them was love," said John Taylor, his father-in-law, "He truly loved God, family and his country."

My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Carla; his two-year old daughter, Laura; his parents, Renatta and Tommy; and all those who knew and loved him.

Peters, Dustin

Hometown: Shirley
Age: 25
Rank: Staff Sergeant
United States Air Force - 314th Logistics Readiness Squadron, 314th Mission
Support Group, 314th Airlift Wing
Where: Killed by a roadside bomb near Bayji, Iraq, on July 11th, 2004

Sgt. Dustin Peters moved to Shirley as a teenager where he graduated from high school in 1996. A year later, he joined the United States Air Force, and completed his basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. He later attended technical training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and in November of 2000, was assigned to Little Rock Air Force Base as a noncommissioned officer in charge of equipment support.

Loved and respected by those who knew him best, Sgt. Peters enjoyed the Air Force and the opportunity to travel the world while making new friends. Although he was still relatively

young, the troops admired him for his friendship and his leadership. He returned to Arkansas last July after serving six months in Iraq but volunteered to serve again in January with a group of young soldiers, many of whom had never been deployed.

“His sole mission to go over there was to take care of those troops,” said Master Sgt. Glen Dagen. “He knew the conditions, he knew the ropes. His fear was that he was going to have his young troops from Little Rock (in Iraq) and he couldn’t be there to take care of them.”

“He had plans,” said Lt. Colonel Daniel Hicks. “He was ready to come home, ready to fish somewhere, ready to hunt. He was ready to be home in Arkansas.” Tragically, he was killed three weeks before he was to return home after a homemade bomb exploded near the convoy he was traveling with near Baghdad. To those who served with him, he will always personify the Air Force motto, service before self.

My thoughts and prayers are with his family and all those who knew and loved him.

Smith, Brandon Clinton

Hometown: Fayetteville

Age: 20

Rank: Private 1st Class

United States Marines - 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force

Where: Killed in an insurgent attack in Al Qaim, Iraq, on March 17th, 2004

Pvc. Brandon Clinton Smith was a graduate of Fayetteville High School. Throughout his childhood, he dreamed of becoming a Marine and this past September, he fulfilled that dream by enlisting. He was so proud of the decision he made that he framed his Marine Corps acceptance letter and hung it in his bedroom.

“He made a great Marine. We could see he had changed when he came back from training. He had found himself,” said an attendee at Pvc. Smith’s funeral, where he was buried with full military honors in Fayetteville on Friday, March 26th.

My thoughts and prayers are with his father, Gordon; his mother, Deborah Bolin; his sister, Desirae; and his family and loved ones.